5: Schwimmer E-4,5 (1966-1967) 1973
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23
Mountain Orokaiva

824 772 partners, while objects of mediation are not imaginary and magical, but have a real existence. I shall deal with these two aspects in turn.

3. *Coconut as an Object of Mediation*

824 [252] [262] [272] [431] Coconut has several culinary uses: it is eaten raw; soup is made of the flesh; the squeezed flesh produces coconut cream in which taro and delicacies such as river crabs may be cooked. Young coconuts are cut open at the top and used for a refreshing drink. Coconut is reserved for two kinds of everyday food gift: cooked dishes offered to guests and young coconut offered to visitors on arrival. Waddell's figures for coconut transactions are surprisingly low (less than 1 lb. per week disposed of in an average household). In Inonda, where the climate favours the coconut, there has been sporadic commercial exploitation of the nut.

[574] [262] [764] Coconuts are also a feasting food. At ordinary harvest feasts and bridewealth payments they are seen on display platforms along with taro and other vegetables. Williams (1930: 44) reports that they used to be placed under a taboo when a large feast was pending. I have already mentioned that at mortuary feasts they are the principal object of mediation between the plant emblem group of the deceased and the village which has provided services to the deceased at the time of death (See Williams 1930: 223–6). I saw a variant of this ceremony at Hohorita in 1967. The plant emblem groups of the deceased couple provided massive gifts displayed on a platform: feast taro, tins of fish, cartons of flour, corned beef in tins, sugar-cane, pots of cooked vegetable food, small bags of salt, smoked meat, a dead pig suspended from a stick, rice, bread, an abundance of betelnut and carved taro suspended from horizontal poles placed above the platform, while at least 1000 lbs. of coconuts, strung to poles supporting each other diagonally, were seen everywhere among the other gifts.

[262] [146] [231] [235] Coconut is correctly believed to be a valuable adjunct to children's diet, as it provides first-class protein. The belief is explained by Orokaiva in a myth quoted by Williams (1928: 122) according to which the first child ever to eat a coconut grew miraculously overnight. Children do eat a good deal of it and it is also fed regularly to dogs and chickens. Orokaiva also regard the effects of coconuts on dogs as miraculous. As neither dogs nor children have any other substantial supply of first-class protein, the coconut relieves a very real diet deficiency. Whatever religious significance is given to the coconut is related to this.

824 778 [302] [789] [881] Coconut oil is used as a cosmetic for hair and body, not only to enhance beauty but also for its magical efficacy. In a ritual performed over a man-slayer, a coconut was broken over his head as a purificatory and 'defensive' device in the sense that the fluid would drive away dangerous spirits (1930: 175). With the same end in view, the bodies of female initiands and certain ornaments worn at dances are rubbed with coconut oil (1930: 207). It would appear, in view of this evidence, that the coconut is in general identified with *ivo* communicated by the dead to the living. The coconuts of a dead leader are thought to contain his *ivo* in a form which is communicable, not to his kinsmen to whom these [761] coconuts are taboo, but particularly to his affines. The quoted ritual uses of the coconut are all associated with some contact with the world of death, i.e. critical situations in which the living have been in contact with death and need the help [764] of the dead to obtain *ivo*. While this *ivo* is communicated, through the mediation

361 mingled more freely as a result of travel on the government
571 roads and trails (which they have to keep in order), trading,
Mission and official gatherings, and other new opportunities
224 for interpersonal relations. One special feature of Orokaiva
life in modern times is the annual burning-off of grasslands
by hunting parties in order to get wild game. This has
[628] probably involved the assembly of larger groups and is one
of the few activities which could induce intersettlement co-
311 operation. The writer sensed the parallel of the crude local
fires set for garden clearing and the general burning-off
of grasslands to the major burning and blackening in the
wake of the volcano—doubtless a mighty job of clearing to
the Orokaiva eye.

157 Within the limits that brief characterizations of personality
norms can be valid, observers seem to agree that the Oro-
kaiva as individuals have traits congruent with the social
structure that favor individuality and mobility. Even the
casual visitor gets a sense of independence, alertness, self-
reliance, "strong talking," dignity, restraint, imperturbability
at meeting the unexpected event, and high-tension inter-
personal behavior in general. This is in particularly striking
contrast to such an elaborately structured society as that
of Samoa, where the writer had been working shortly before.
In informal groups seen around the camps and waiting at
airfields for transport, women and children, far from being
in the background, kept up a busy verbal exchange with the
men. The Administration has considered the Orokaiva ter-
[657] ritory as perhaps the best recruiting ground for its Royal
[625] Papuan Constabulary on the basis of these personality char-
acteristics, including ability to meet crisis conditions such
as patrols may encounter.

791 The Orokaiva religious history is also particularly inter-
esting here. Their traditional faith, Williams says, though
in many respects vague and locally variable, concerned itself
"primarily with the spirits of the dead" and their influence
on the welfare of the living. Death was appraised with
[761] particular realism, although it was considered ultimately as
[789] the result of supernatural causes. Magic had a consistent
place. Orokaiva country, however, has been swept in modern
794 times by a series of new cults indicative of religious adap-
tability in the face of fresh experience. First to come into
prominence was the *Baigona,* or "snake cult" of 1911-12,
succeeded from 1914 on by the so-called "Taro cult" which
in turn had undergone a series of local reformulations by
the time Williams reported on it in 1924.[7] Central features
of the Taro cult were association of successful taro cultiva-
tion with the ancestral spirits, approached by way of a
"shaking-fit" technique of revelation, together with some-
what new types of public ritual and symbols, including frag-
mentary elements from Christianity. Later Belshaw and
others reported that "Christian Co-operative Evangelist"
societies, which were developed by the Anglican Mission
among some Orokaiva converts for the cooperative growing
of rice and other crops, tended to assume a somewhat parallel
404 and absorbing mystical agriculture context. Rumors spread
668 of "an order from the King (of England) that co-operatives
791

7. *Orokaiva Magic,* Part I; see also Chinnery, E. W. P. and Had-
[113] don, A. C., "Five New Religious Cults in British New Guinea," *Hibbert Journal,* 15, 3 pp. 448-463 (1917). Materials are also found in the official reports of the time.